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BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTES.

BOOKS.

DEMON POSSESSION AND ALLIED THEMES. Being an Inductive Study of Phenomena of our own Times. By Rev. JOHN L. NEVIUS, D. D., for forty years a Missionary to the Chinese. With an Introduction by Rev. F. F. ELLINWOOD, D. D., Secretary of the Board of Missions of the Presbyterian Church. With an Index. (Also a Note of Explanation, by HENRY W. RANKIN.) Second Edition, with Corrections and Supplement. Chicago: F. H. Revell Company. 1896. Pp. x, 520.

At the desire of the editor of this Journal, I have laid aside for the moment the philanthropic work which now completely "possesses" me, in order to carefully peruse and briefly review this posthumous work of one of China's oldest and most respected missionaries. The time has not been wasted. The book is not intended as the pabulum of a morbid imagination which delights in wild fiction, blood-curdling apparitions, and subliminal mysteries. It is the plain record of thirty-two cases of Chinese spirit or demon possession, compared with nine similar cases in other lands; a calm study of the different theories put forth by different writers in order to account for phenomena apparently supernatural; a presentation of the Biblical theory to which the author adheres; a historical doctrine of demonism, spiritism, and occult literature, enriched by supplemental notes and an exhaustive index. Upon a close comparison of the cases of possession related in the New Testament with the modern Chinese instances, Dr. Nevius distinguishes twenty-four points of correspondence apparently exact; also fourteen points of agreement between the spiritistic phenomena in China and those associated with mediums in this country and in Europe. Until a better is produced, this work will serve as a general introduction to the whole large field and literature of matters commonly regarded as "occult." Great credit is due to the editor, Dr. H. W. Rankin, for his painstaking researches, his scrupulous exactness in all details, his fairness in judging authors, the pleasant flow of his style, and the amiable modesty with which he leaves the reader to discover how much the book owes to its second editor. Both authors deserve high praise for having maintained the courage of their convictions, and for publishing their views, in face of the certainty that the medical authorities would hold them in scorn, that "spiritualists" will not pardon their assimilation to heathen devil-worshippers, and that very few theologians will venture publicly to indorse the conclusions. This is not the place to examine the problems of demon possession from the theologic or pathologic points of view, nor to give my own opinions. Mr. Rankin has noticed (p. 438) passages of my articles published in this Journal, having reference to the subject. A pretty clear view of African spirit-possession could be gathered from my "Folk-Tales of Angola," as originally written, and some hints can be found in Notes 97, 180, 444, 474, and in No. xli. of the published portion. Instead of recapitulating and examining the facts given by

Nevius, I shall briefly present for comparison the series of analogous facts observed by me in Africa.

(1.) In Angola, and practically in the whole of Africa south of the the Sahara, the phenomena observed in China by Dr. Nevius, and by him so accurately recorded, are very common occurrences, and no one doubts the reality of possession.

(2.) In Africa, as in China, possession is clearly distinguished from epilepsy, hysteria, insanity, and other diseases, although these diseases, as well as all others, are sometimes ascribed to the influence of spirits.

(3.) Possession is either voluntary or involuntary. Where it is voluntary, it can be brought on by going through certain prescribed formalities; but only by persons who have the faculty of being possessed. Certain mediums can be possessed only by certain spirits.

(4.) Voluntary possession is always resorted to in order to obtain definite information; for example, in regard to an object that has been lost, to the whereabouts of a person, the cause of a disease, the remedy to be employed, the success of an undertaking. As possession is extremely exhausting and often painful, and as a clever lie is, in heathen Africa, a feat of which to be proud and not a sin, a genuine medium may often feign to be possessed in order to get the fee with less trouble. In view of the gain, some may profess to be diviners, while they are simply jugglers. It is admitted that spirits may be great liars as well as men. Divination, therefore, is not supposed to be absolutely reliable.

(5.) A medium may be possessed by the human spirit of a deceased person, or by a non-human spirit. Many of these non-human spirits are known by name, and their characters, manners, and traits are as familiar to the natives as were those of the classical gods to Greeks and Romans. In fact, the attributes of the principal African spirits correspond with those of the principal so-called classical divinities.

(6.) The spirit of a white man buried in Africa may possess a medium as well as the spirit of a native. In this case the medium will speak in the language of the white man, and with his voice, without knowing either. (This I myself have never witnessed, but it has repeatedly been attested.) Other superhuman actions are performed by possessed persons; and these often use words which are no longer in currency among the living.

(7.) By the African the spirits are never confounded with God. God is considered to be the creator, preserver, and supreme ruler of all things. He is invisible and omnipresent, though thought of as residing on high. His proper name is *Nzambi*, or some modification of that word. Where a tribe has lost his proper name, one of his descriptive names is retained, such as The Great One, The Old One, He in Heaven. No person, no object (charm, talisman, or fetish) is possessed by him, nor is he represented by any external cult; but he is universally revered, sometimes directly invoked, and almost always submitted to without a murmur. According to a tradition, varying in different sections of the continent, he was at first friendly to man. But foolish man became disobedient and tricky. Therefore God turned his back on him, and has left him to shift for himself.

The spirits of nature can influence the elements, and thus in one way or another affect all human events. Human spirits or shades can also affect the living for weal or woe. Both the human and non-human spirits are neither entirely good nor entirely bad. They have the same passions as human kind, are favorable to such as render them services (serve, worship them), and are opposed to those who neglect them. They bless their friends, and harm their enemies. The living do not love them; they fear them. They do not worship them (in our usual sense of the word), but consult them through the proper media, and propitiate them by sacrifices (gifts); they enlist them one against another, or against fellow-men. The latter course of action is witchcraft, the greatest crime of which an African is capable, and hence punishable by death. In Kimbundu (the language of Angola proper) to worship — that is, to honor or do homage to — the spirits is entitled *Ku-beza*; to consult them for the purpose of divination, *Ku-zambula*; for the purpose of healing, *Ku-saka*; to enlist them against a fellow-man (to bewitch him) is *Ku-loua*; to be possessed by a spirit, *Ku-xingila*. Magic (working wonders) is *Kipa*.

(8.) Certain families have special guardian spirits; and in each family there is always one member who has the faculty of being possessed. In Loanda, when a civilized native lady is the family medium, she sometimes avoids the unpleasantness of the function by purchasing a slave-girl, and to her transferring the spirit. The oracle is then supposed to come from the spirit of the lady through her slave.

(9.) The spirit which was in the habit of taking forcible possession of my boy Jeremiah ceased to trouble him after the advent of the American mission in Malange. This seems to agree with the facts noticed in China.

(10.) It is believed that the guardian spirits of the white men are far superior to those of Africa, and that therefore it is impossible to bewitch a white man, and that it is of little use for the blacks to attempt to overcome the whites.

(11.) The history of African missions exhibits several examples where the heathen oracle has spoken in favor of Christian missionaries.

(12.) As did the Catholic missionaries of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, so those of the present day whom I have met firmly believe that Satan (not spirits) is active in every pagan function, talisman, or oracle.

(13.) My impression is that about the special phenomena studied by Dr. Nevius must cluster many others which further investigation would bring to light. As for Africa, what has here been said is merely a partial skeleton. Seeing that Mr. Rankin is so well prepared and situated for such a task, he would do well to prepare a series of questions, which might be sent to missionaries in Africa and elsewhere. Doubtless the responses would exhibit many new facts, and furnish material for a volume perhaps even more valuable than that to which he has so generously devoted himself. It is possible that the American Folk-Lore Society might be glad to assist in making public the material.

Heli Chatelain.